

## ENERGY

# House Pulls ANWR Drilling Bill, Passes Refinery Measure

By **Darren Goode**

Opposition from the United Mine Workers of America, Democrats and Pennsylvania Republicans forced the House Wednesday to delay until at least next week its consideration of a plan to use money from oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to pay pensions and other costs for retired coal miners.

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Democrats largely were unified in their environmental objections over drilling in ANWR and in their uncertainty about how much oil production and royalties would be gained from drilling for cleanup and workers' costs.

There is also concern that Senate opposition to ANWR drilling will prevent the Pombo plan from passing before current funding expires at the end of September. "It's a long shot," said one House Republican aide who supports the ANWR plan.

**Nick Rahall**, D-W.Va., and **Rep. Barbara Cubin**, R-Wyo., that would address cleanup and miners' health care, like Pombo's plan, but would not attach those funds to drilling in ANWR. It also would keep the funding off-budget and away from congressional appropriators by using reclamation fees to pay estimated cleanup costs through 2019.

A Cubin spokesman said she might offer her bill as a stand-alone or to any appropriations bill moving before current cleanup funding expires. The House Resources Committee held a hearing in March on the Cubin-Rahall bill, and Pombo opposes it because he believes it is too expensive.

If all else fails, the House could apply another one-year band-aid during the appropriations debate that keeps abandoned mine cleanup funding going for another year.

Meanwhile, the House approved, 239-192, a Republican plan to expedite permits of refineries in areas with unemployment rates at least 20 percent higher than the national average. However, a bill pushed by **Majority Whip Blunt** and **Rep. Paul Ryan**, R-Wis., that would have addressed the gasoline prices by targeting Clean Air Act clean fuel regulations did not receive the two-thirds support needed when expediting a bill by suspending regular order rules.

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The spokesman said negotiations continue in the hope of bringing a revised plan back on the House floor by next week. Added a House GOP aide, "It's not dead in the water."

The Pombo plan would have used some expected royalties and other money derived from drilling in ANWR over about 30 years to pay for pensions and healthcare costs for retired miners, as well as for cleanup of abandoned mines.

The union objected in part because officials there believe it would take mining companies off the hook for providing health care and other payments to miners.

**Rep. John Peterson**, R-Pa., said it would not prioritize cleanup funding for abandoned mines in states that have historic coal production and related cleanup problems.

The Pombo plan largely would continue an existing formula that prioritizes funding for Western states that currently produce the most coal, in part because Western coal has lower sulfur levels that can more easily meet environmental standards. Eastern coal states produced the most coal up until about a decade ago and still have cleanup problems related to previously used mining methods that created environmental and health problems.

Some House members, both Republicans and Democrats, would have opposed the Pombo plan even though they would normally vote in favor of ANWR drilling.

Some House lawmakers continue to work on alternative proposals.

Peterson has offered the Bush administration's plan to pay back over 10 years the funds Wyoming coal producers have put into the abandoned mines cleanup program and then use the remainder to prioritize funding for states with "historic" damage due to coal production.

But some lawmakers instead are pushing a bipartisan package by **House Resources ranking member**